

2. File  
**COUNCIL FOR SPECIALIZED PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS, INC.**

309 WEST 80 STREET • NEW YORK, N. Y. 10024

877-3380

27 June 1977

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Professor Joshua Lederberg  
Department of Genetics  
Stanford University  
Stanford, California 94305

Dear Professor:

At the suggestion of Mr. Jacob Wortman, I am taking this opportunity to acquaint you with some of the background of this organization and its relationship to the specialized public high schools operated under the aegis of the Board of Education.

Early in 1966 the specialized high schools were alarmed by statements emanating from Headquarters advertising to the possibility of unifying the first two years of instruction in all high schools in this city. The specialized high schools perceived this proposal as a threat to the integrity of their courses of study and determined to organize for their safety. Parents, teachers, alumni, and students were involved and a charter was issued in 1966 after articles of incorporation and a constitution were filed with the Secretary of State. The news media were notified of the formation of the organization, and a statement was issued on behalf of all the schools denouncing the proposed "unifying" of the first two years of high schools as a not-too-subtle attempt to vitiate the strength of the four schools. We received excellent press attention and it was not too long before the Superintendent denied that he had ever entertained the remotest idea of altering the courses of these schools in any fashion. That this statement was made after an advertisement in the New York TIMES had advised New Yorkers of the details of the proposal was, of course, a remarkable coincidence.

Since that event this organization has been in the forefront of the continuing battle to maintain these institutions and protect them from the assault of the educationists who have equated equality with uniformity. We have fought the charges of "cultural bias" attributed to the entrance examinations, and the committee appointed by an avowed enemy, Chancellor Harvey Scribner, reported that the charges were without foundation. This occurred after we had been instrumental in securing passage of a state law mandating an entrance examination and commending the Board of Education to maintain the four specialized high schools. Governor Rockefeller approved the Hecht-Calandra Act notwithstanding the vehement opposition of Chancellor Scribner and Mayor Lindsay.

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There have been many attacks on these specialized high schools over the years, the latest having been the charge that since their population make-up does not reflect the percentage distribution of various groups in the city, that is prima facie evidence of discrimination. Yet another committee was appointed to investigate the validity of these charges, and the schools were again cleared of any bias in admissions. This charge has now been taken up by a worthy of the H E W Department and there will undoubtedly be another period of agony ahead as these investigators perform their feats o f magic. We are prepared to go to court should additional charges be made.

There are probably many questions you wish to put to me and I shall be pleased to respond to them since I have been a member of the organization since its inception. I have served on the various investigative committees appointed by the Chancellor and am profoundly biased in favor of specialized high schools, having graduated from Townsend Harris Hall which was abolished shortly after I received my diploma. One of the things THHS did not teach was typing, so I hope you will forgive the many typing errors in the course of this letter. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely yours,



Ira Marienhoff

My home address is 499 Fort Washington Avenue  
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